

STAT

TIME

19 January 1976



TIME INTERVIEW

'It's Maddening and Frustrating'

William E. Colby had just returned from Richard Welch's funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. Still dressed in a somber charcoal gray pin-stripe suit and dark tie, the CIA Director held a 90-minute interview with TIME Correspondent Strobe Talbott. Colby's successor-designate, George Bush, is expected to be confirmed by the Senate shortly after Congress reconvenes next week. Soon after that Colby will retire, ending a quarter-century in the CIA. In the excerpts, Colby gives his personal views on a number of issues involving the record of the CIA and its proper role in a democracy.

Q. How did you enter intelligence work?

A. My intelligence career started during World War II with the Office of Strategic Services. Two Frenchmen and I went into France to help organize, arm and supply the Maquis [France's anti-Nazi Resistance fighters]. I also went up to [Nazi-occupied] Norway with a small team. We operated on our own up in the hills, coming down to blow up railroad lines.

COLBY (IN RAINCOAT) AT WELCH'S FUNERAL

After the war I wandered off into the law business [practicing with OSS Chief William ("Wild Bill") Donovan's firm in New York]. When the Korean War came along I went back into intelligence. The cold war was very much with us. A lot of people thought this was the precursor to another overall war.

I went to Sweden and then to Italy, where I focused on Italian politics: the rise of the Communist party, the opening to the left during the '50s. It was a kind of a postgraduate course. Frankly, I think good covert operations well handled, well timed, can solve a problem at an early stage while it's still small.

Q. Did you and many of the other people of your generation who went into the CIA tend to think of yourselves as liberals?

A. I considered myself an ideological liberal. Remember, the biggest enemy the Communists had were the liberals, not the conservatives. After World War II, the Communists were out to secure a monopoly on the left wing.

TIME, JANUARY 19, 1976

continued